

Department of English & Writing Studies

English 2401E (650)
American Literature Survey
Summer 2023

Instructor: Dr. Clarissa Suranyi
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Delivery method: Online asynchronous

Prerequisites: At least 60% in 1.0 of English 1020-1999 or permission of the Department.

Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Course Description

This course offers a survey of important texts and authors from the Puritan and Revolutionary periods to the present. It addresses not only the major movements and styles of American literature associated with such authors as Poe, Dickinson, Twain, Hemingway, and Morrison, but also the innovative work of Indigenous and minoritized authors, situating their writings within the contexts of race, gender, and sexuality.

Learning Outcomes:

- Think critically about American literature and culture and understand the historical and literary contexts of works.
- Distinguish between periods, movements, and styles and discuss the differences between colonial, nineteenth century, modernist, and contemporary American literature.
- Develop further the ability to analyze texts critically, and to formulate and produce essays which have a clear, well-articulated intent and a logical argument supported by adequate evidence from the text(s) under discussion.
- Research critical commentary on literary texts and evaluate the relevance, reliability, and usefulness of research sources, especially those obtained through the internet.
- Write a research essay using secondary sources documented using the Modern Language Association (MLA) method.

Course Materials**Required Texts:**

Richard Levine et al., *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, shorter 10th edition.

Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*. Random House.

Toni Morrison, *Beloved*. Random House.

Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*. Random House.

Reading and working with these specific editions is preferred, especially for essays. If you already have some or all of the texts in different editions, then inform me what edition you will be using in your essays. The Western Bookstore will have these texts that you can either buy in person or order online. You may also find the books at your local bookstore. During the course, you are expected to read the online lectures in combination with the texts. All lectures, assignments, and other learning materials (except books) will be posted to our OWL course site.

Methods of Evaluation

Study Question	5% (500 words)	See Assignments folder on OWL for due dates
Essay 1	10% (1000 words)	Due May 19
Essay 2	15% (1000 words)	Due June 9
Annotated Bibliography	10% (500 words)	Due July 7
Essay 3 (research paper)	25% (2000 words)	Due July 21
Final Exam	35%	Scheduled by Registrar during final exam period

Note: The Department of English & Writing Studies does not release final grades. All undergraduate grade reports will be available from the Office of the Registrar.

Students are fully responsible for looking at and being familiar with the information posted on the department website at <https://www.uwo.ca/english/undergraduate/Student%20Information.html>

Western University Land Acknowledgment: Western University is situated on the traditional territories of the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Lunaapeewak and Attawandaron peoples, who have longstanding relationships to the land and region of southwestern Ontario and the City of London. The local First Nation communities of this area include Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, Oneida Nation of the Thames, and Munsee Delaware Nation. In the region, there are eleven First Nation communities and a growing Indigenous urban population. Western values the significant historical and contemporary contributions of local and regional First Nations and all of the Original peoples of Turtle Island (North America).

Important Information

Contacting your instructor:

EMAIL:

I am happy to communicate with students by e-mail. Please allow 24 hours for a response on weekdays and 48 hours on weekends. Students must use their UWO email and check it regularly for messages pertinent to the course. Messages sent from email providers such as yahoo, gmail or hotmail will not be answered, so please use your UWO email account for messages to your instructor. In addition, please ensure that your emails conform to the rudimentary standards of university discourse: emails should use correct grammar, complete sentences, and a professional tone. Rude or harassing emails, or emails from students requesting information readily available on the course outline, will not be answered.

TELEPHONE OR ZOOM CALLS:

Students wanting to engage in an extended conversation about the course work—discussions or questions about lecture material, essay or exam expectations or results, course readings, etc.—may e-mail me to set up a time that is convenient for both of us to have a telephone or Zoom conversation.

Final Exam:

The final exam for this course will have an open-book “take-home” format. The exam questions will be posted on OWL 24 hours prior to the start of the scheduled exam time slot, and students must upload their answers to OWL prior to the end of that scheduled time slot.

Assignments:

Assignments must be submitted online through OWL. Go to the Assignments tab and click on the appropriate assignment to see the instructions/essay topics and to attach your assignments. Your papers will automatically be uploaded to Turnitin simultaneously. Check to ensure your paper has uploaded properly. It is your responsibility to ensure its delivery. Assignments will not be accepted by e-mail.

Essay Format and Citation Style:

Your essays must follow MLA (Modern Language Association) format. There is a useful online guide to MLA style at the following address: <https://style.mla.org/mla-format/>. Should you need more detailed information, the comprehensive *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* is available at Western Libraries.

Regarding citing sources and avoiding plagiarism, the basic rule to follow is that you must indicate the source of any ideas and words that are not your own—whether you are quoting directly or paraphrasing. To cite these sources, you must use parenthetical citations in the body of your essay as well as a Works Cited list at the end of the essay.

Using Websites:

There are many websites dedicated to literature and American literature. Unfortunately, the majority of websites associated with American literature can be general, misleading, or inaccurate. Though the biographical information is generally accurate, most do not move beyond plot summary. Hence, you need to be careful when using a website. First, if you consult a website you need to document it correctly (again, see the MLA format guidelines). Second, most criticism on websites tends to be naïve and lacking in analysis.

Essay Writing:

This is an Honours English literature course, so you will be evaluated based on your ability to write clear, well-argued essays. Elements such as grammar, organization, argumentation, citation, and editing are all important and will affect your grade. The complete grading criteria is in the Learner Resources folder on our OWL course site.

Below are directions for writing effective essays.

- Your essay must have a clear **thesis**. A thesis is a statement of what you are trying to prove in the essay—your argument, your point, your stance or position. It should be something with which your reader can potentially agree or disagree; it should not be a statement of fact or general knowledge. Also remember you are making a literary argument – you are saying something about the form and content of literature (or the non-fictional genres on the syllabus) that is important to how you are interpreting the work. In general, your thesis is most effective near the end of your introductory paragraph.
- Your essay must have a clear **structure**. This means that you need definite introductory and concluding paragraphs. As well, your body paragraphs should follow a logical order of argument, covering specific points and/or ideas that support and work to support your thesis. Make sure that each paragraph has a topic and concluding statement, and that you establish smooth transitions between paragraphs. Attention to good structure helps your reader follow your argument, and helps you keep your thoughts and evidence organized.

- Always be **specific**. Do not assume that your reader will “get” what you are alluding to (think of a theoretical reader who may be familiar with the topic or the text in question, but needs specific information in order to engage fully with your argument). Quoting briefly from the primary text—the novel or short story, for instance—is always a good idea to give your reader a definite context for what you are saying.
- Take time to **plan and outline**. Before writing the first words of your essay, spend time planning and outlining it. Gather your evidence and look for patterns, similarities, and differences. Remind yourself what it is that you want to discuss and prove, then think about the best way to organize your essay accordingly. What is your argument or position? What evidence will you need to support your thesis? What is the most effective way to structure the essay—what argument should come first and what is your most important evidence? Essentially, when you sit down to write, you should have a firm idea of what you want to do in your essay and how the parts will fit together. Good planning and outlining will save you tension and frustration.
- Write about **what interests and excites you**. When considering a topic, think of what you liked most in the texts on the course—issues, ideas, themes, passages, and so forth. What would you like to explore further? What would you find interesting to write about for six or eight pages? If you enjoy what you are writing about, your essay will show it.
- Finally, **reread and edit**. Before submitting your paper, reread it and revise it as necessary, looking for everything from typos to potentially unclear sentences to improper essay format. Having someone else look at a draft is always a good idea, particularly if you trust that person to be honest and helpful. The value of a “clean” essay to a reader cannot be underestimated, for it shows that you care about your writing, which in turn encourages the reader to care about what you are writing.

If you are not familiar with the basic technical vocabulary of English literary studies, you may want to consult a handbook of literary terms. M. H. Abrams *A Glossary of Literary Terms* offers an excellent source book for literary terms. For an overview of recent literary and critical theory, consult *The John Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism*.

Late Penalty and Extensions:

Late assignments will be penalized 2% per day, including weekends, unless the student has received an extension. Students must ask for extensions well in advance of the due date and offer a good reason for the extension (academic workload, job schedule conflicts, and vacations are not good reasons). No extension will be given to any student on the day the assignment is due. Assignments that are more than 7 days late will not be accepted.

If you miss an exam or an assignment due date, or if you require an extension at the last minute on medical or compassionate grounds, you must notify your academic counsellor immediately and follow the procedure below.

Academic Consideration for Missed Work:

For work totalling 10% or more of the final course grade, you must provide valid medical or supporting documentation to the Academic Counselling Office of your Faculty of Registration as soon as possible. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor. For further information, please consult the University's medical illness policy at https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf.

The Student Medical Certificate is available at

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf.

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to <https://www.uwo.ca/health/psych/index.html> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

See <https://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/> for more details.

Absences from Final Examinations:

If you miss the Final Exam, please contact the Academic Counselling office of your Faculty of Registration as soon as you are able to do so. They will assess your eligibility to write a Special Examination (the name given by the University to a makeup Final Exam). You may also be eligible to write the Special Exam if you are in a "Multiple Exam Situation" (e.g., more than 2 exams in 23-hour period, more than 3 exams in a 47-hour period).

Students should also note that individual instructors are not permitted to receive documentation directly from a student, whether in support of an application for consideration on medical grounds, or for other reasons.

Religious Accommodation:

When a course requirement conflicts with a religious holiday that requires an absence from the University or prohibits certain activities, students should request accommodation for their absence in writing at least two weeks prior to the holiday to the course instructor and/or the Academic Counselling office of their Faculty of Registration. Please consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays (updated annually) at:

<https://multiculturalcalendar.com/ecal/index.php?s=c-univwo>.

Students with Disabilities:

Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact Accessible Education, which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The policy on Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities can be found at:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic_Accommodation_disabilities.pdf.

Academic Offences

There is **ZERO** tolerance for plagiarism in this course. The penalties regarding **PLAGIARISM** (the unacknowledged use of another person's work) are severe and will be enforced. You are responsible for being aware of the nature of plagiarism as it is detailed in the University calendar and in the Department of English's "Instructions for Students" sheet. All scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf.

Statement on the use of plagiarism-checking software:

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

All instances of plagiarism will be reported to the Chair of Undergraduate Studies. Proven cases of plagiarism will result in a grade of zero for the assignment. Subsequent offences will result in failure for the course.

Intellectual Property/Copyright

All instructor-written materials (e.g. lecture notes, discussion questions) for this course are created solely for students' personal use within the course, and remain the instructor's intellectual property. Further reproduction, fixation, distribution, transmission, dissemination, communication, or any other uses, without securing the consent of the copyright owner (the course instructor) may be an infringement of copyright. You may not distribute, email, or otherwise communicate these materials to any other person. These limitations extend to recording, photographing, or sharing lectures (online or in-person) and lecture material without permission. Posting the instructor's content from this course to online course sharing sites like OneClass or Course Hero without permission is both an infringement of intellectual property law and a violation of academic integrity guidelines. The instructor will pass these cases on to the Western University Ombudsperson or their Department Chair as appropriate.

Support Services

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Timetable

Note: Except for *The Scarlet Letter*, *Invisible Man*, and *Beloved*, all readings are in the *Norton Anthology of American Literature* (shorter 10th ed). Because the anthology is frequently revised, readings may change (for example, the selection of poems by Emily Dickinson).

PART I – CONTACT AND COLONIAL LITERATURE

WEEK 1: Iroquois creation story; John Smith, “A Description of New England”; John Winthrop, “A Model of Christian Charity”; Roger Williams, “The Bloody Tenet of Persecution” (available: <http://www.reformedreader.org/rbb/williams/btp.htm>); William Bradford, Book I and II, “Of Plymouth Plantation”; Anne Bradstreet, “To My Dear and Loving Husband,” “Contemplations,” and “The Flesh and the Spirit” (“The Flesh and the Spirit” is available here: <https://rpo.library.utoronto.ca/content/flesh-and-spirit>).

WEEK 2: Mary Rowlandson, *A Narrative of Captivity* (all selections in anthology); J. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur, *Letters from an American Farmer* (all selections in anthology); Phillis Wheatley, “On the Death of the Reverend George Whitefield” and “On Being Brought from Africa to America”; Benjamin Franklin, *The Autobiography* (Part I); Thomas Jefferson “The Declaration of Independence”

PART II — NINETEENTH CENTURY LITERATURE

WEEK 3: Nathaniel Hawthorne, “My Kinsman, Major Molineux,” and *The Scarlet Letter* (skip “The Custom-House” opening to *The Scarlet Letter*)
Herman Melville, “Bartleby, The Scrivener”; Henry David Thoreau, “Resistance to Civil Government”; Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Self-Reliance,” “Nature”

WEEK 4: Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (selections from chapter I, VII, X, XIV, XXI, and XLI); Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself*

WEEK 5: William Apess “An Indian’s Looking-Glass for the White Man”; Walt Whitman, “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry” and *Song of Myself*; Emily Dickinson, poetry selections (see lectures for assigned poems: note that some of the poems in the lectures are not in the new Anthology, but you can find these poems in the library or on the internet).

WEEK 6: Mark Twain, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*; Frederick Douglass, “What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?”

PART III — MODERNIST LITERATURE

WEEK 7: Charlotte Perkins Gilman, “The Yellow Wall-Paper”; Henry James, *The Turn of the Screw*; Kate Chopin, “The Story of an Hour”; Sui Sin Far, “Mrs. Spring Fragrance”; Zitkala-Ša, “Impressions of an Indian Childhood”; W. E. B. Du Bois, from *The Souls of Black Folk* (ch. 1, 3)

WEEK 8: H.D., “Leda” and “Helen”
Langston Hughes: “The Negro Speaks of Rivers,” “I, Too,” and “Let America Be America Again” (available here: <https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/let-america-be-america-again>)
Robert Frost: “The Road Not Taken,” “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening,” “Mending Wall,” “After Apple-Picking,” “Birches,” “Design,” and “Desert Places”

William Carlos Williams: "The Red Wheelbarrow," "Portrait of a Lady," "Spring and All," and "To Elsie"

Wallace Stevens: "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird," "Anecdote of the Jar," "The Snow Man," "The Emperor of Ice Cream," and "Sunday Morning"

Start Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*

WEEK 9: Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*

PART IV — CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE

WEEK 10: Sylvia Plath ("Daddy" and "Lady Lazarus"); Allen Ginsberg, "Howl"; Gwendolyn Brooks, "The Last Quatrain of the Ballad of Emmett Till"; Maxine Hong Kingston, "No Name Woman" (from *The Woman Warrior*); start Toni Morrison, *Beloved*

WEEK 11: Toni Morrison, *Beloved*

WEEK 12: finish *Beloved*; Leslie Marmon Silko, "Lullaby"; Gloria Anzaldua, "How to Tame a Wild Tongue"; Jhumpa Lahiri, "Sexy"